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ABSTRACT

This publication contains the stories of seven African-American students in the literacy class at the Council for Senior Citizens in Warrenton, North Carolina. The stories were inspired by photographs selected from photographic books with images of African Americans in familiar settings, particularly rural settings. Autobiographical information about the authors accompanies each selection. Titles are as follows: "Gettin' Baptized," "Making Quilts," "Good Old Mule," "Death in the Family," "Community Elders," "Fishing Story," and "The Mule." Following the stories is an article, "Using Photographs to Inspire Writing and Create Learning Experiences" by Jereann King. A detailed description of the process covers prewriting discussion and activities, writing, postwriting discussion, developing activities, and evaluation discussion. A sample lesson with photograph follows. (YLB)

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Just Like When

A Collection of Stories by New Writers Inspired by Photographs

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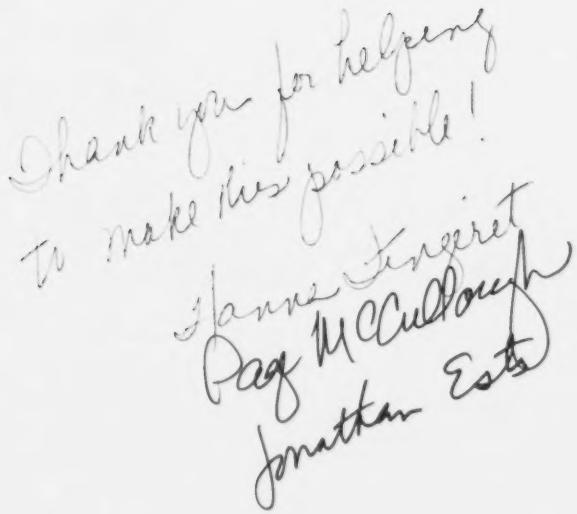
Just Like When

A Collection of Stories by New Writers Inspired by Photographs

Carrie Perry
Marie Thornton
Richard Williams
Rebecca Taylor
Pauline Watson
Maggie Perry
Naomi Alexander



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"Mrs. Rosie Lee Baker (born 1923) Holmes County, Mississippi" is from Something to Keep You Warm by Roland Freeman. Published by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. Photographs reprinted by permission of Roland Freeman, © 1991.

"Community Elders, Mississippi, July 1975" and "Mule-powered sugar-can grinder, Mississippi, December, 1975"are from Southern Roads, City Pavements by Roland Freeman, reprinted by permission, © 1991.

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"Funeral Wake, ca. 1940, Memphis, TN" by Rev. L.O. Taylor from Southern Eye, Southern Mind. Published by The Memphis Academy of the Arts, Memphis, TN, 1981. Photograph reprinted by permission of the Center for Southern Folklore Archives, © 1991.

Cover Photograph: "Community elders. Mississippi, July 1975." From Southern Roads/City Pavements, by Roland Freeman.

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Stories Collected by Jereann King
Design by Jonathan Estes and Jereann King
Production by Jonathan Estes

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Acknowledgments

Great care has been made to bring out the voices of the senior citizens involved in this publication in ways that express who they are as people and writers, their time in history and their place in the world today. It is with many thanks to the seniors, whose lives and experiences make this book possible.

We are deeply indebted to Catherine Kearney and Gertrude Hawkins for their many volunteer hours in the literacy class and for their assistance in curriculum development. Bertha Forte, director of the senior center, was most inspirational and supportive of this project and we own her many thanks. Often times during class and during the production of this publication, words or expressions came up that we needed to know more about. Many thanks to Geneva Pitchford who was always available to answer questions or set the record straight. Sheila Kingsberry Burt, through her own writing skills and appreciation for the power of the human voice, contributed immensely to this project. Her support is greatly appreciated.

The foundation for this writing process is the collection of photographic images that inspired the writings. Deep gratitude is owed to the photographers who had the vision and talent to capture the spirit of time in images. Many thanks to the photographers and book publishers for granting permission to use their photographs in this publication. Special thanks is due to Roland Freeman, Paul Kwilecki, and Sarah Hoskins for supporting and encouraging use of their photographs in this kind of process. Roland Freeman said, "I feel honored that my photographs were used in a class with senior citizens to inspire them to write." He sees his contribution to Just Like When as a way of giving back much of what he has received.

About the Photographers

Roland L. Freeman, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, and presently based in Washington, D.C., has taught documentary photography at George Washington University and was photographer-in-residence/research associate with the Institute for the Arts and the Humanities at Howard University. Since 1963, Roland has been involved in an on-going project using the camera as a research tool in the study of Black culture throughout the African Diaspora. This project is called "While There Is Still Time," and seeks to research, document, interpret and exhibit some of the last vestiges of traditional African American Folklife practices.

Sarah Hoskins is a freelance photographer based in Chicago, working throughout the country. Focusing on documentary and editorial worked, she has been involved with various literacy programs for several years. She feels lucky to be a part of this program and the people. Sarah photographed the senior citizens in Warren County, North Carolina during the winter of 1990.

We could not locate information about **Pat Goudvis**.

Paul Kwilecki was born in 1928 in Bainbridge, Georgia, the county seat of Decatur County, where he has lived most of his life. He is a graduate of Emory University. Kwilecki began making his photographic record of Decatur County in 1960 and in 1975 sold his hardware business to devote all of his time to photography. He has received fellowship grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Rev. L.O. Taylor (1890-1977) left behind him a rare portrait of the Black community in Memphis, Tennessee from the 1920's through the 1950's. His early photos were largely confined to social occasions. Later his photographic interest shifted to a more documentary nature reflecting his community's interest in building a spiritually, socially, and economically viable way of life. He also made 16mm films and 78 rpm audio disc recordings. Rev. L.O. Taylor was most of all a humanitarian who dedicated himself to his community. The value of his photographs stems not only from their beauty, but also from the insight of a man who, "made no difference in people," enabling him to show his own culture in much of its human complexity.

Introduction

When I asked the students in the literacy class at the Council for Senior Citizens in Warrenton, N.C. if they had ever heard the saying, 'A picture is worth a thousand words,' they thought for a moment or two and said, "Don't believe so," or "I don't recall." I asked that question because I thought photographs could spark their interest in talking and writing about their lives. The stories in this booklet came out of that class experience.

There were seven women and three men, all African Americans, in the class. My challenge as a literacy instructor was to create learning experiences that were relevant and important to them. One approach I used was to base lessons on their strengths, experiences, and knowledge. I started by identifying the literacy skills that help students meet their goals and that are useful in their daily lives. To stimulate their memories and generate conversation, I took all of my photographic books to class and asked the seniors to select pictures that they wanted to talk about, write about or that reminded them of someone, something, or sometime. I tried to choose photographic books with images of African Americans in familiar settings, particularly rural settings. Understandings, by Paul Kwilecki is a collection of photographs of Decatur County, Georgia. I grew up there and knew some of the places and people in the photographs. Southern Roads/City Pavements, by Roland Freeman is an excellent resource because it shows African Americans working on the farm, having fun, being creative and loving each other.

Each student took a book and started to carefully inspect the photos. One by one they would turn the pages, hesitate, smile, frown, or nod their heads when they came upon their special photo. For this particular class, my objective was to get them to talk about, listen to and reflect on the things they know. Once the photographs were selected, the students began talking about what the photo reminded them of and why the photo was special or important to them. Then we started to write. The students' writing skills were on different levels. Some wrote with little trouble; others struggled to get every word down; some of the photo inspired stories were dictated by the students.

In writing these stories, students were encouraged to be writers first and editors later. During the writing process, I was able to identify specific skill areas that students needed help with and create learner-centered lessons specifically to address those skills or to generate discussion about past events and practices. For example, when Pauline Watson wrote the story on the community elders, she wrote, "I like the pitcher of the community elders because . . ." Part of her lesson focused on distinguishing between 'picture' and 'pitcher.' She knew the different uses for the words, but she was not sure about the appropriate spellings. I knew that Pauline had been active in her church community for a long time and that she might have some ideas about the role of community elders. Part of her lesson was centered around answering questions about community elders and why they are important.

Naomi Alexander talked about a mill in her story. This led to a wonderful discussion about the importance of local mills 50 years ago. The seniors reminded themselves about all the mills that use to operate in the county, where they were located and the things they remembered about them. Then we talked about 'first flour' and 'second flour,' which was something I knew nothing about. I learned that the refined and light flour sifted out of the grounded wheat was called 'first flour,' while 'second flour' had more bran in it and was more course and dark. Today's wheat flour is like second flour. All of this was a real history lesson for me.

The history that was discussed and documented out of these class experiences was an important part of this work. We hope this publication will show readers the power of students using their own words to tell about their lives and help teachers understand how to support new writers in discovering their voices. Just Like When intends, simply, to underscore a process where people share their histories, their cultures, their ideas and dreams that result in valued and appreciated learning and wisdom.

Jereann King
December, 1991

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Photo by Sarah Hoskins © 1991

Carrie Perry

b. November 9, 1922

I was born in Perrytown, but I was raised in Snow Hill. I left Perrytown when I was six years old. My mother used to go to Warrenton and leave me there to watch the other children because I was the oldest. We had to sit under the hickory nut tree until she came home walking, toting the bags. My daddy worked in Virgilina, Virginia at the saw mill. I went to school in the first grade but I never got out of the first grade. I didn't go to school because I didn't have sufficient clothes. The children laughed at me and threw rocks at me because of how I dressed. I never married but I had eight children. I didn't kill nary one. A lot of folks would have had them if they hadn't gotten rid of them.

When I was young, I was ashamed to go to school but I'm here now because I am never going to be ashamed again.

Gettin' Baptized

My name is Carrie Perry. I was baptized in Yellowood Creek below the Snow Hill Baptist Church. I was 12 years old. I will never forget that day. I was afraid to be baptized because I had the whooping cough. My grandmother, Geniver Perry, told me to go on and be baptized.

We all got in a line and sang the song, "Going to the Water to be Baptized." Rev. Peter C. Davis baptized me. I felt good and I was happy.

Carrie Perry

Photo by Paul Kwilecki ©1981

Baptism, Mt. Zuma, 1977

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Photo by Sarah Hoskins ©1991

Marie Thornton

b. June 6, 1923

I grew up in Hymontown, but I was born in Allenville. I grew up playing house. Me and my sister would call ourselves cooking and washing dishes. When I was nine years old, my mother started me cooking meat and biscuits. I even cooked an apple pie. I stopped school in seventh grade because my daddy wouldn't let me go to Hawkins High School. He said the children were over there courting and having babies. In 1942, when I was 18, I got married. I met my husband, at least he met me, at the well, at a children's day program in Perrytown. I saw him standing in the church door and he just looked like a special man.

We had nine children--six boys and three girls (my husband had two children when I married him, so together we had 11 children total). I feel good about my family. I loved being a mother even when I was young and now that I am old, I enjoy my children when they come home, and I still love my husband.

Making Quilts

When I became a mother, I started making quilts out of sweaters and pants' legs and skirt tails and dresses. We did not have money like now to buy material. I had 11 children to quilt for. So now I have stopped making quilts because my children have left home.

Marie Thornton

Mrs. Rosie Lee Baker (born 1923)
Holmes County, Mississippi

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Richard Williams

b. January 1, 1920

Photo by Sarah Hoskins ©1991

My name is Richard Williams. I live in the Ridgeway community in Warren County, N.C. I have enjoyed my life, what I was doing at that time. The most I enjoy today is peddling my vegetables. I enjoy raising crops and selling them and talking to people when they come by my truck.

Since I am the age I am now, I can't work like I use to work, which I know is natural. I am thankful for what I can do. The favor of what the Good Lord had done for me, I'm proud to get to the age I am.

I been farming practically all of my life, raised on the farm, that is where I have been.

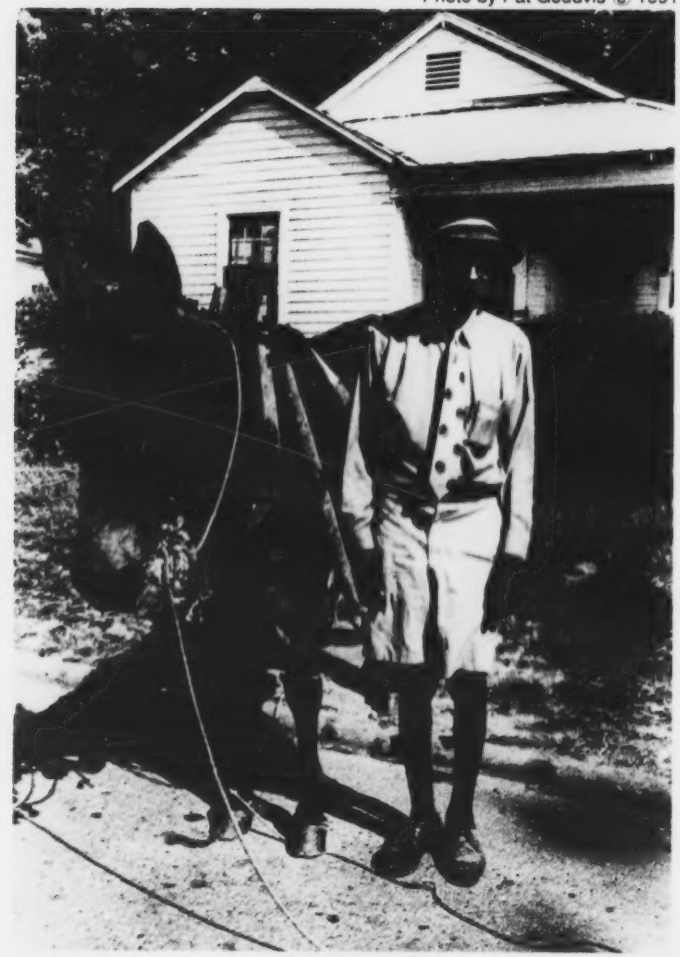
Good Old Mule

My name is Richard Williams. I love being a farmer. I would like to go back to the time when I could go to the stable, catch the old mule, hook him up and go out and plow.

I had a good slim mule named Lady. She was the best plowing mule I ever had.

Richard Williams

Photo by Pat Goudvis © 1991



Untitled

Photo by Sarah Hoskins ©1991

Rebecca Taylor

b. April 17, 1934

I grew up in Perrytown working in tobacco and playing. When I was old enough, I had to mind the little children. I stopped going to school in the 6th grade because I got so far behind. When I was fifteen, our house caught fire. My mother and two sisters got burned up in the fire. We were living in Macon. I went to live with my brother, Roosevelt, back in Perrytown. He was good to me.

I got married July 19, 1987. My husband, James is doing fair. I like marriage fine. I enjoy life.

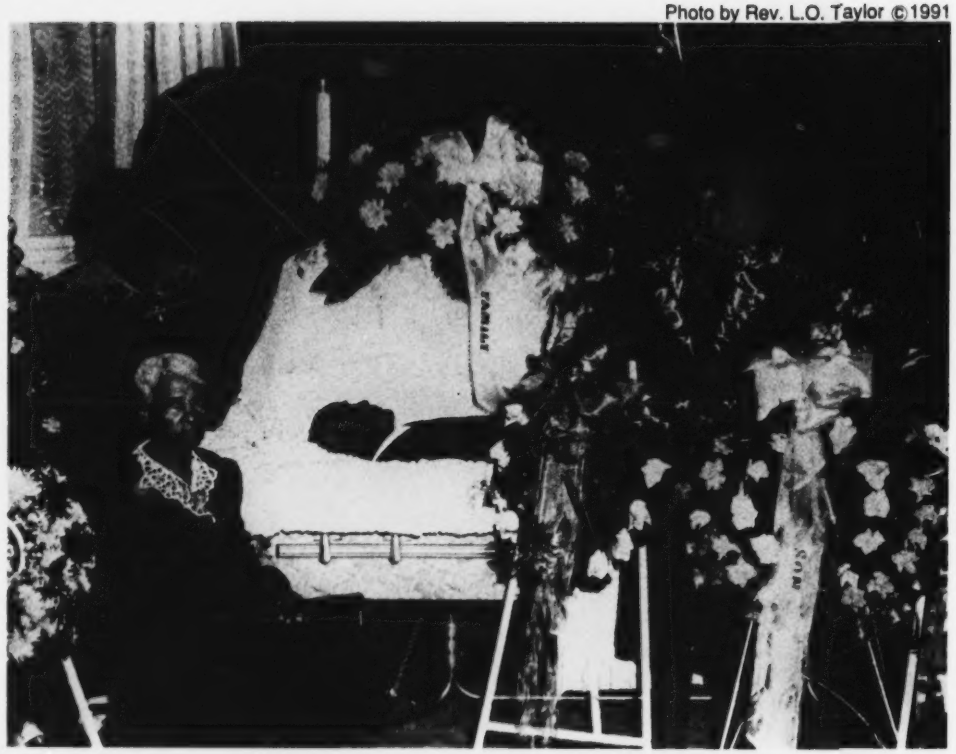
Death in the Family

My brother died three years ago. He was 48 years old. He had cancer and sugar.

My brother had a sad funeral. It was at Greenwood Baptist Church. There were a lot of flowers. I felt very sad. I miss my brother.

Rebecca Taylor

Photo by Rev. L.O. Taylor ©1991



Funeral Wake, ca. 1940, Memphis, TN

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Photo by Sarah Hoskins c 1991

Pauline Watson

b. October 18, 1910

I have had a very good life so far. I got married in 1929, the oldest child was born in 1930. I wasn't sick at that time. I always thought I was very healthy until now. But all things come to an end. I raised my children and I thank the Lord things are as well as they are.

In the church, I served as secretary for 19 years. I didn't ever resign. The only reason I'm not serving now is because my brother was appointed treasurer and a brother and sister can not hold both positions.

I love serving the church. I go there to sing and pray. Our pastor has been there for 12 years, and in all that time, there was only one song he asked me to sing that I didn't sing and it is:

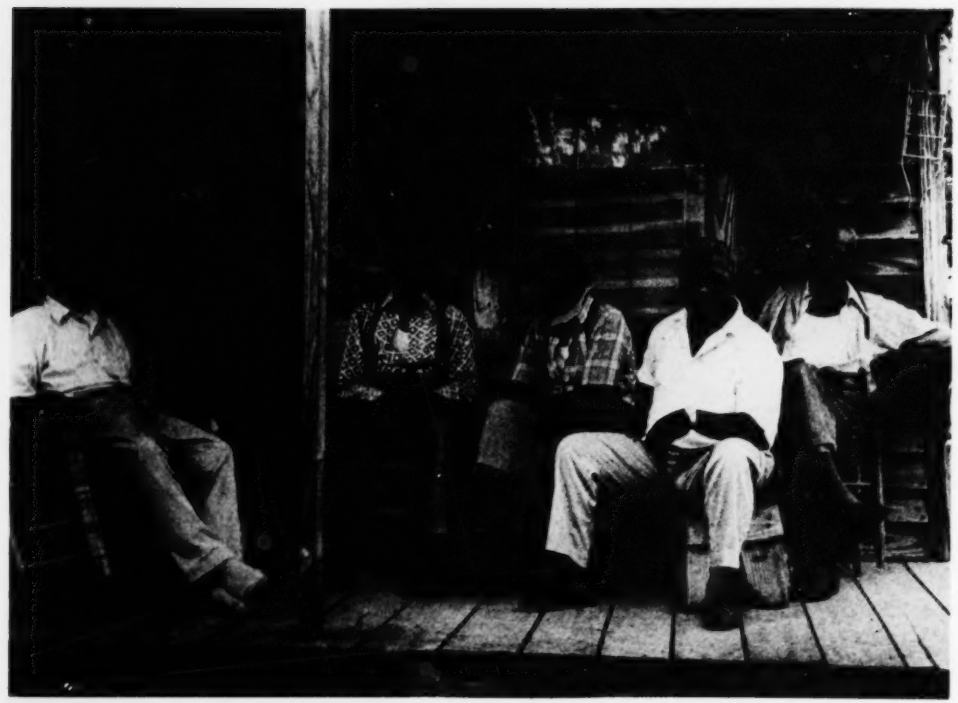
"I'll go sweeping through the city,
My captain go on before,
We will sit down by the bank of the river
And we won't be back no more."

Community Elders

I like the picture of the Community Elders because they are happy talking, praying, singing and telling of the good times and the bad times, and the happy times they have in church, keeping things together in the church. It is a lovely time when men can sit down together and reason together talking about the goodness of God and sharing their love with the members.

Pauline Watson

Photo by Roland L. Freeman ©1991



Community elders. Mississippi, July 1975

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Photo by Sarah Hoskins ©1991

Maggie Perry

b. March 16, 1908

I've had a good life. I've always been good to old people. I've been good all of my life.

I first got religion in the yard while I was mindin' the baby. I heard folk singing at the church and I got so happy that I put the baby on the pallet and started to holler. My daddy was coming from town on the wagon. He came to see what was going on. He took me to my aunt's house and she put one of her pongee blouses and a skirt on me and washed my feet and I went on to the church. I didn't even have any shoes on. They were singing "When The Saints Go Marching In." That was a day. Honey. That was a day.

I always went by what the old people told me. I have been a member of Snow Hill Baptist Church since I was 8 years old. All I can say is that the Lord has been good to me. He kept me here.

Fishing Story

My husband's name was King Perry. My friend's name was Lee Watson. Many years ago we fished together in No Bottom Pond. We caught horney heads, catfish and eels. We fished day and night. We had a good time together.

Maggie Perry

Photo by Paul Kwilecki ©1981

Man and wife fishing, Flint River, 1980.

Photo by Sarah Hoskins c 1991

Naomi Alexander

b. July 3, 1913

I was born down in Youngsville, North Carolina. When I was 4 years old, my mother took me to Palmer Springs, Virginia to my grandmother. When I was in the 6th grade, I had to leave school to work. Wasn't no use going one day then out the next. I grew up farming: Picking cotton and greens; picking up potatoes; working in tobacco. It was alright.

I left when I was 20. I married and left. Me and my husband went to Henderson and got married. We lived in Palmer Springs until all eight of our children were born. When my baby was five (he won't old enough to go to school) we moved to Norlina, me and my husband and all eight of my children.

Me and my husband did okay. We had some ups and downs (when they get a hold of that mean liquor, they don't know what to do— it was just like it is now). But we were together 32 years. We married in '33 and he died in '65.

The Mule

I like the picture of the mule because my grandaddy had a mule. He used the mule to plow his garden and his crop. He raised wheat, cotton, corn, peanuts, potatoes, and beans.

My grandaddy made flour from the wheat. He cut the wheat and took it to the mill to grind into flour. We had first flour and second flour.

- Naomi Alexander

Photo by Roland L. Freeman c 1991

Mule-powered sugar-cane grinder
Mississippi, December, 1975

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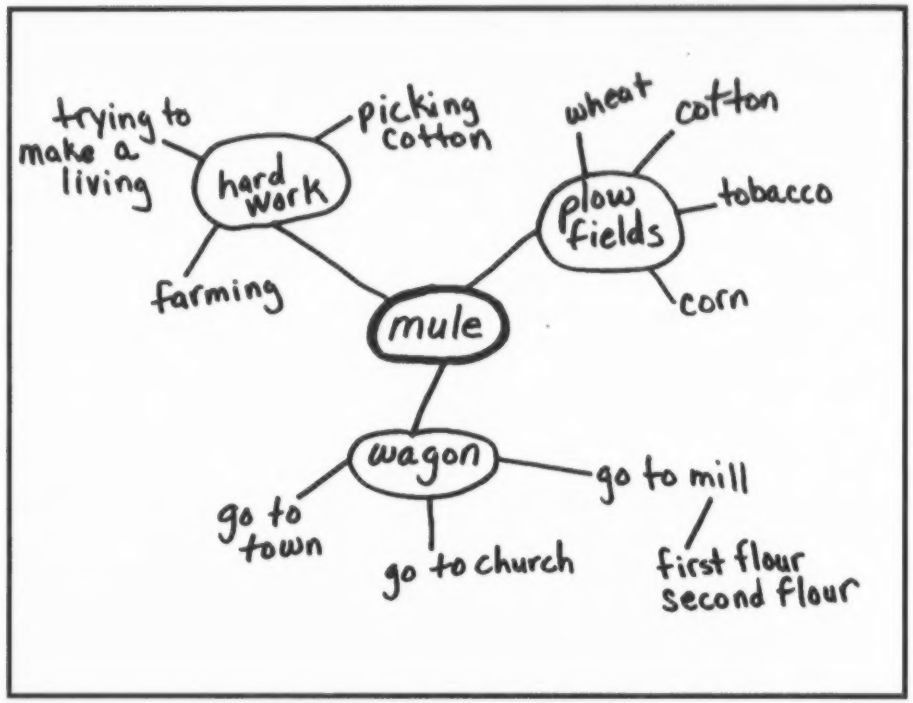
Sample Lesson

Using Photographs to Inspire Writing and Create Learning Experiences

By Jereann King

The learning experiences of the seniors in the class resulted from a process of using photographs that inspired discussions, writing, activities, and evaluation. This process allowed the seniors and me as the teacher to engage in a learner centered approach to literacy that gave the seniors a new voice in writing and sharing their writing. This process gave me new knowledge about the language and lives of the seniors. The following is a detailed description of using photographs to encourage writing, sharing experiences, and developing literacy skills:



Sample of Clustering Exercise

1: Prewriting discussion and activities

The purpose of the prewriting discussion is to identify experiences, skills, and knowledge that students bring to the class and to connect students to what they already know about the topic. Questions are structured not only to examine the students' personal experiences but also to help students understand relationships between their personal experiences and the broader world experience. As ideas are generated, they are clustered around the main theme or topic in ways that show the connections and relationships. Clustering can be thought of as a different way of outlining a subject. For example, one student chose a picture of a mule and said it reminded her of the "farm."

During the clustering process, listen for general concepts or expressions that can be restated to form a stem sentence. For example: "I like the picture of the mule because . . ." Using a stem sentence gives writers something to start with and helps them not to be overwhelmed by a blank sheet of paper. Select the stem sentence that is directly related to the topic of conversation at that time so it is easier for the students to follow up in writing.

2: Writing

Encourage the students to write what they are thinking and feeling without worrying about grammar and spelling--to be writers first and then editors. They can refer to their cluster for thoughts and topics and how they relate. Encourage the students to ask themselves if the writing says what they mean and if the meaning is presented in a logical and clear order.

3: Post-writing Discussion

There is a lot of power generated when students read their writing and when it is read by others. After the writing is shared, gear the discussion to

respond to meaning and content. Ask the audience: How does the writing make you feel? What questions does the piece raise? Are the author's intended expressions clearly stated?

4: Developing Activities

Analyze the students' writing to identify skills areas that each one can work on, for example: spelling, punctuation, grammar, reading comprehension, etc. Present these skill-building activities while the students write their pieces and during another class periods. Activities can also be designed to identify other student interest areas, to learn about additional knowledge on the topic, and to produce other writings.

5: Evaluation Discussion

An important part of learning in the class is to ask questions that help all of us improve our process of learning and teaching. The questions below can be discussed in class or can be maintained in the form of a journal:

<u>For the students:</u>

How did you feel about the lesson?
What did you learn?
What else do you want to know about this topic?
What new skills do you want to learn?

<u>For the teacher:</u>

What happened?
How did you feel about the lesson?
What did you learn?
What do you want to do different next time?

Pre-Writing Discussion Questions

1. What does the picture of the mule remind you of?
2. How did your family get to own its farmland?
3. What did you like most about growing up on a farm? What didn't you like?
4. What made working on the farm better or worse than working in a factory?

Photo by Roland L. Freeman ©1991

Writing

I like the picture of the mule because my grandaddy had a mule. He used the mule to plow his garden and his crop. He raised wheat, cotton, corn, peanuts, potatoes, and beans.

My grandaddy made flour from the wheat. He cut the wheat and took it to the mill to grind into flour. We had first flour and second flour.

- Naomi Alexander

Post-writing Discussion Questions

1. Where were the mills usually located and why were they important to community life?
2. Do you know how the prices are set for the crops that you grow?
3. What is first flour and what do you bake with first flour?
4. What is second flour and what do you bake with second flour?
5. Which flour is better for your health, first or second flour?

Activity

Write or share a favorite recipe that can be made using first flour.

Evaluation

For the students:

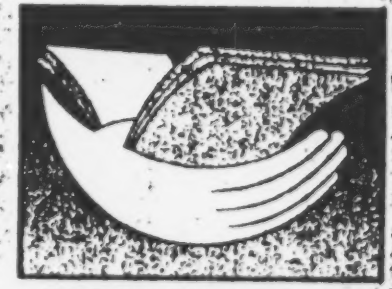
1. How did you feel writing about the photograph of the mule?
2. What did you like most about this lesson?
3. What did you learn about mills in Warren County?
4. Would you like to visit the old mill on the Baltimore Road?
5. What new words did you learn to spell? What other words do you want to learn to spell?
6. What did the teacher learn from your writing?

SAMPLE LESSON

For the teacher:

1. How did you feel about this lesson?
2. What did you learn about using photographs to encourage student writing?
3. What did you learn about first flour and second flour? Why is learning about this important?
4. How would you do this lesson differently next time?

5. What skills do you feel the students mastered? Who needs more work on what?



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